

THE MAGIC SALESMAN

So I found my calling at last. Prepared as no candidate before me by my worldly search, I became a confirmed "acid head" and began preaching an inviolate prophesy of chemical liberation to a congregation quickly gathering before me. It seemed preordained.

Meeting Ralph then augmented my role as a major distributor. We promptly assumed responsibility to disseminate the sacraments of this new order throughout our island world. Sharing a mutual prognosis there'd be a brisk business in merchandising enlightenment, our pad in Waikiki's "jungle" became magic central for the entire South Pacific. Routine flights to Owsley's lab in San Francisco for five-thousand hits barely kept up with the rapacious appetite of our curious clientele.

However, in some hope to stay on track, and before we get into the business at hand, I should make it clear that my tenure in "magic" was short and sweet, to say the least. My inability to format a proper chronology of the movement's metamorphosis and neat stuff like Kool-Aid Acid Tests or Rainbow Gatherings is Tricky Dick's fault, for he changed the laws, and I got run outta Dodge mighty quick to settle into that neat little war we had going in the far east. I became a virtual longterm refugee from the bursting wonder of our times. I'm really sorry that its special period for me and Kela was so brief.

There must've been some exceptional sex, music, and group shit goin' on while I was busy at the front lines with "Charley the gook" and my elite killer pals, but as the FNG's would say, "there it is." This refers to a dis-ease of terminal resignation most Fuckin' New Guys had, like when your bullet was due. Efficient military slang, it was all coined with exacting meanings for that wonderful place many of us found ourselves so deeply mired in.

My unique perspective as a mercenary in its insanity may well make up for partial disclosure of the hippies' saga. Others can tell that one. My recollections from 'Nam stem from an ethereal view that no soldier could've had...kinda like the Big Picture, with a camera aloof and invisible. I don't begrudge anything, even a few personality disorders, and am more pleased to miss the jail time which surely awaited me, had I hidden to watch those curious happenings back in the world.

I probably would've been a dealer like Ralph, more than an actual performer in that quicksand slide-show that rushed by and was over before I returned from exile a few years later. My membership vaporized before I even had a chance to explore a full relationship with my girl, sad as it may be.

But Nixon was determined to crush drug exploration before it got loose, and I'm one of his first casualties.

Taking a post at leadership level in spreading the news by peddling sacraments, I became the equivalent of an echelon commander in the IRA, and quick as a flash, like the British, they had my number. I still prefer "magic salesman" to "dope dealer," but my enemy, our government, targeted me early and I was marked expendable. It's a good thing I got away, for my obtuse angle on Vietnam should prove worthy in its own right. It looms larger in extent than that of those actually on its stage. They probably couldn't see too good for the smoke, flares, and chemical distortion. Your storyteller, on the other hand, was led into a far-reaching overview of scope, objectivity, and obscene proportions.

Ralph was a more intense creature than any I ever met, something like a predator in his solitary station just beyond the circle of brotherhood, friendship, or even mankind. I knew him better than anyone, but never saw a bit of human frailty, sensitivity, or slightest glimpse of simple joy supposedly in us all. There was in him a consistent, malicious smirk of achievement...hinting at the power he held over his very existence.

With his angular features, long black hair, and piercing eyes, he was untouched by fear, emotion, or danger of any kind...driven by an implacable rage as if he'd been here before and already knew its hideous outcome. He'd let the beast which lives in each of us out of its cage. We were twenty-two then...in eight years, he would be one of the most dangerous men on earth.

In the beginning, we tested the limits of all the sacraments together, but may've drawn different conclusions. Where I saw salvation, he may have weighed only profit. Our paths would merge, but we were bound to diverse and extraordinary destinies. Perhaps some debt's still outstanding for all we accomplished together.

In this first year, there was a remarkable flowering of human awareness, and before hastily enacted legislation made exploration of these uncharted regions illegal, everyone was tripping out. We shared in the rites of our communion some fresh hope for human endeavor, reaching with acute sensitivity into the deepest corners of the mind, from Logos to Eros, reporting back to each other that it was good! Would we lie to ourselves on such a scale? The brightest and best were in this movement, and it became a national phenomenon of extraordinary proportions! Could anyone think only loose-moraled, low-lives took this course?

The greatest philosophers of our age extolled the virtues of the psychedelic experience. Aldous Huxley and Alan Watts urged us on, while at our helm a vague corporeal manifestation of Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert steered us through this turbulent period. America's conscience was forced to come to grips with its own surging evolution and

identity. In some atavistic revival of spiritual grace coterminous with the dawning of nuclear winter, and a profligate rumor that God was dead, the birth of a new virtual reality came upon us in an exacting moment, without a clearcut messiah and lacking a Holy Grail.

I could grow with this, knowing such an expansion of consciousness was due. LSD was opening needed channels of communication at every level of life. It would only require individual belief and sharing the message to fix our broken planet. Profits from our booming business were spent on guidebooks, which we loaned to seekers like roadmaps at some cosmic filling station. The amassed collection of mystical literature threatened to topple on us as we peddled altered states of mind in a flurry of supply and demand. Beating a path to our door came the rich and poor, learned and simple, young and old in hopes of tasting a Eucharistic rebirthing inherent in these benedictions. Without exception we gave them what they came for!

Mescaline, the active ingredient of the peyote cactus, had been used by American Indians forever. The same was true for psilocybin--derivative of the psilocybe mushroom--known from antiquity by tribes of South America as "teonanacatl," the flesh of God. LSD, lysergic acid diethylamide, an ergot alkaloid brewed up by accident in a test tube, filled out our menu of mental catalysts, and none of it was illegal yet! Besides, we were your neighborhood, cheap volume movers. Everything was just a dollar and you could pay the next day!

No one made a steady diet of these potent substances, because, for starters, they required eight hours of severe concentration. We never referred to them as drugs, for the word itself seemed an affront to our sense of righteousness and mandate to spread the word. We rarely used marijuana, but probably wouldn't have classed it as such either. Perhaps it's a simple matter of semantics, but drugs they weren't, at least not in medical jargon, imbued with connotations like craving and dulling of the senses. It was quite the opposite. These crucial exponentials were awesomely powerful catalysts, mind-expanding springboards capable of opening vast new frontiers to the common man...and we had nothing to do with their arrival.

I would not listen to warnings from Dick's cronies about "killer weed" and the drug-zombie paranoia brewing in his power circles. What did these loggerheaded bureaucrats know of our spiritual research, using these keys to Godhead? What was this blasphemy of one drug leading to another into addiction, madness, and death? Far at the other end of this spectrum, we held firm to our faith that the saving grace of our very race had come in these little pills...hallucinogens measured in teeny micrograms, but capable of altering the thought process of an entire species!

On the lighter side, we played in a paradise more beautiful than any we'd ever known. Nature was now enriched

with an iridescent fullness, significance, and even humor, unnoticed before these voyages of illumination. One learned to recognize its subtle hues in everyday life. This comfort level and familiarity appeared a process of maturation into actual God-consciousness. We all believed this much.

The simple joys of island life took on new meaning. Surfing on acid became a religious experience, the caress of a giant wave God's hand sweeping me through a crystalline ecstasy, while His very breath whooshed me out of a tube as a perfect wave wrapped me in livingness. Standing beneath thundering waterfalls in rainbowed forests with birds in a chorus of color brought tears to my eyes. Everyday events such as skateboarding or swinging on giant vines into jungle pools overwhelmed me with glee. I was a participant at last in the wondrous miracle of life.

We grew in these experiences, playing like little kids as the universe poured its once-hidden magic upon us. Exploring the reefs of my youth, I stood transfixed in awe at the magnificence of creation's diversity, astounded by the woven texture of its interaction, and wondering how this had passed my scrutiny before. To kill these creatures now was beyond me, and I swam in great schools, a finny friend seemingly able to communicate and breathe with them, arcing and twisting in the symbiotic sea we were all part of.

Every thing and thought was heightened, deepened, or infused with more meaning, and we became aware of the fragile eco-system around us and conservation of the raw essence of our precious islands. The great barracuda in the deep channel came forward now, circling and looking me in the eye, for he knew I'd cast my pole to him in forgiveness.

We didn't mature overnight and were still into pranks, some of them lacking any meaning, and I've yet to figure out why we laid on the runway at Honolulu Airport, a frightening experience with no reason behind it. We'd hold each other's ankles in a form of cosmic chicken, while wheels of landing jets would rush on either side. We shook like a clutch of wriggling worms to stay near the white line, awash in the roar of their engines. We grooved around in the "wiggum car," cracking up as humanity ran amok outside, a tour of jostling drones in a shopping center leaving us all hysterical. We rode our fat-tired "snooper" bicycles around Kapiolani Park at night, following silvered pathways in the moonlit grass, while palms swayed in beatific nods, haloed by the shadow of Diamond Head.

Reality was still at hand...sometimes a little too close. I had a difficult time with an angry policeman who insisted on my identity. It was more than I could comprehend. "Who are you?" is a very pregnant question at the height of a psychedelic trip. I had no idea! It was worse when I got into my wallet and couldn't get out. He ordered me to meet him across the park at his patrol car, but when I got there he'd turned into a trash can, so I wandered

home without giving it another thought.

Blowing your mind became a common occurrence, especially once we discovered nitrous oxide, or laughing gas. After stealing a tank or two from a hospital, we'd explore uncharted regions of inner space like a coven of sorcerors. It was not all magic. Without any guidance and no preset boundaries or maps to show us the way back, a few began to lose their way. Like an aloof scientist, I viewed our experiments as evolutionary, complete with errors and mutants, assuming those who fell by the wayside psychotically predisposed or simply part of the process in such a surge of growth. Shit happens...

That distinctive hunger to transcend selfhood, reach ex stasis, or "out of body" ecstasy, and taste the infinite, overrode any fear, and our band of dedicated pioneers forged bravely through inevitable overdoses and early tragedies. The first one I saw kept mumbling, "When the sun goes down," eating handfuls of dirt and grass, finally leaping at sunset off the cliff to his death at the base of our waterfall. None of us could grok his statement or what it might herald for the future, but Paul spent that night on the summit hitchhiking in his white robes, waiting for God to pick him up rather than come down for an inquiry. We tried to take care of our own, but some were just doomed from the start. As fast as things were changing, who could keep track or know what was coming next? There was no help from any quarter. We were on our own...

While we dabbled in newfound potions on the shores of Shangri La, steady winds of change blew across the planet: art, music, clothing, and lifestyles altered forever in their passing. The last thing I remember of youth was kissing and holding your breath to "Love Me Tender." Suddenly swept away in a whirlpool of sitars, Beatlemania, and electric music, America shifted into warp drive and off we went! I foresaw it all for a moment--our vision of love and peace complete with hippies and flower children, the essential good in man come to the fore--and wondered critically whether we could pull it off.

I held serious doubts--not that I was a pessimist--but more from the sheer magnitude of its challenge. Time has a way of grinding visionaries down like stones to sand. Regardless, our generation breathed as one, expecting the rest to follow. We balanced delicately in the wonder of chemical bliss, sure what we were seeing was real, thinking we could actually "turn on" the world, and waiting for them to get aboard. As its fulcrum shifted, the best come forward, but too many slipped away. The laws, I screamed, this shouldn't be made illegal!

We weren't blind! We had powerful medicine, and those brave enough to take a stand fiercely sensed our time had come. There was talk of changing "turn on" to "take over," but with no leader, varying degrees of confidence carried

each new day. It almost seems we'd been prepared for its arrival by a blatant void in our country's view of Creation...like the Hawaiians who'd cast off their "kahunas" and idols just before the missionaries came, leaving them ripe for conversion to a new God.

Eastern religions, yogis, gurus, and mantras became commonplace overnight. Psychedelic posters, rock and roll, head shops, and hippies flowered in the rich medium, like mushrooms on a verdant forest floor as our group collectively blew its mind in the legality crisis, never to be the same again. We'd concluded these keys had been offered in an auspicious moment to change man's mind...and we might've succeeded if we'd stuck together to fight the laws. There was simply too much confusion. Most just grabbed their stash and ran...

It was OK, not bad actually, and the best group shot in the last five-thousand years. Our world order just never quite formed up. No one could have led us anyway, and apathy is as grave a force as friction or gravity. Even if Jesus had shown up to lead our brotherhood, He would've been nailed again by the powers that be. Do you think Tricky Dick would've permitted such a revolution? It doesn't matter if Leary was a bit of a loon, or that JFK didn't stand up and say, "Let's turn on the world." Like any idealistic movement, there were failings, but leaderless revolutions die at their own peculiar speed. The lies inherent within our times laid waste to our utopian dream like bad acid trips soured our taste for instant euphoria.

Kent State, Vietnam, massive drug busts, and too many assassinations punctuate the knelling bell of our rise and demise. I'm not surprised or saddened at the failure, but in that Camelot era of Hawaii, circa 1965, when this discovery was the most profound truth we'd ever known, it bothered me very much to be suddenly turned into a criminal!

I guess they believed protecting us from ourselves was necessary. Foregoing any public hearings, a paranoid legislature, driven by a panic-peddling media, moved swiftly to criminalize psychedelic usage, creating a generation of felons overnight without even asking us what we were up to. It was now high treason to explore one's own mind with substances surely God-given. The drug commissars of this inquisition descended on us in slaving packs, searching houses and persons, bullying, harassing, and arresting us at will...engendering a great fear and disenchantment with democracy that we will never forget.

In the early days, we weren't outlaws, but became such in short order. What with everything we valued stripped away, opposites began forming up quickly. Human nature reacts in this fashion. Having tried prohibition, we should've known better than to legislate morality again. This time, a generation of young believers in something new was targeted, not a whole nation. Following that breach of

trust everything just broke down. It became us against them.

It was a full-blown tragedy, even the short version I saw. Looking back's not worth much...something like twenty-twenty hindsight, only good for politicians. Reaction in the street matters. Like Cheech and Chong who flushed everything down the toilet when someone knocked on their door, we began to keep our vials stashed in hollow cabbages in the refrigerator.

An aura of the forbidden took its usual course, with gestures of rebellion replacing our previous caution and somewhat scientific probing. We withdrew from society, as is the outlaw's wont, while illicit labs polluted previously pure supplies with the greed of carpetbaggers peddling bottled satori and encapsulated samadhi. Criminal elements infiltrated our once-innocent ranks, groping for their percentage.

It was sad to see young people trying to deal with this terror while in fragile states of soul-searching limbo. Many of our mutants and missing are the direct result of those flustered lawmakers' decision and the real paranoia they invoked. Where some freedom to search for God our way might've been preserved with a fair semblance of dignity and safety, all our medicinal sacraments were grouped in the penalty-bearing class of heroin and cocaine. It was a mindless over-reaction. No wonder Ralph became a kingpin in a higher-priced commodity...

I don't even wanna discuss marijuana, as a simple sacrament--harmless and sometimes helpful--but thrown in with the rest. By this broad brush stroke, we were branded outcasts...forever entangled in legal barbed wire around our plants and mushrooms. A fatal wedge was driven between us and our seemingly anti-spiritual elders, creating a disenchanting population of about thirty-million souls on both sides of the baby boomer's arc who would never sing "America the beautiful" again.

Where compromise could've been tried, all-out war was declared, and yours truly became one of the first targets in a free-fire zone unparalleled in our civil rights history. I stand by my heartfelt reasoning still...there was true promise in the sacraments, and disaster in the drugs. Banning them all together serialized an end to our age of discovery.

Thus came the birthing, in its place, of that hydra-headed monster we cannot kill now...for its drugged presence is everywhere. More profitable than the entire world's automobile business, five-hundred billion dollars a year pass through gangster's hands, while seventy-seven million of us rot in jails today on drug charges. Interdiction, payoffs to corrupt dictators, and spraying farmers' crops brings it past the trillion mark.

A success story unequalled in the annals of government thinking, it didn't even take a Constitutional Amendment

like prohibition. A handful of Nixon's buddies created this undeclared war around a coffee table...and changed our world forever.

Speaking of outlaws, Ralph continued expanding in his churlish power before my disbelieving eyes, slipping out with his forty-five, silk stocking, and wool cap to prowl the towering concrete pillars of our environs, seeking worthy prey. It was serious pursuit to him, but I had to laugh when he came in sometimes. Once he dumped a sackful of watches, wallets, and currency on his bed. Pulling off the stocking, he moaned and kicked the wall, "The little fucker wasn't alone tonight, there were a dozen Chinamen playing poker in the accounting suite. I blew it! There were so many spooked eyes on me and hands in the air I forgot to make him open the wall safe and missed the payroll I went for."

The following week he was at Queen's Surf with his buddy running the light show, when suddenly everything went dead and ten-thousand in cash disappeared during the seventy-second blackout. He was out and back in under eight minutes, with his smirk about the same. It was like practicing "down periscope" to him. He appreciated timing and preciseness. Immeasurable tests of courage were his high, and he even did this stuff on acid!

I considered a new roommate, but was mesmerized by his control. He was like a panther in slow motion closing on its kill. I found it hard to look away. No matter that he was good at it. He was an exceptional partner, and we might have gone far together if there'd been time to modify his methods. Unfortunately, it was in short supply for both of us. He split for Colombia to join a cartel the same night I headed in the other direction on an old tugboat. Tricky Dick moved us so...

Before this rising trauma reached its crescendo, I spent some wonderful moments exploring sexuality's potential with Kela. Having a "safe house" for a week, we decorated the bedroom into an erotic sanctuary. Stashing in some fruit, wine, and our favorite music, my high school sweetheart took me on a fantasy trip to another world. It was the most provocative experience of my life. We each did 2,500 micrograms of Owsley's "white light," a true meltdown by any standards, and spiraled into the genetic chain flowing in our body.

It was utterly mind boggling! Lost somewhere in us, we became each other, she the male penetrating force, I the receptive female center of the universe. Locked in a climactic, orgasmic state for half the eight-hour trip, we were unable to speak or even move without each other's consummate thought. We were sperm swimming upstream, slithering along pink walls of uterine chambers, entering egg, and becoming zygote. The warmth, ooze, and colors of our organism carried us on a journey through the evolutionary history of cellular life. Enraptured in an indescribable

bliss, we made love to us...God's absolute being in union with Himself.

When, somewhere near the end of the trip, I noticed her clinging to me, I knew she sensed what was coming next in our crazy life together. In mute apprehension, I acknowledged and looked away, trying to keep this dark secret from her, for I'd caught a glimpse of its horrific vision raging at me like a tidal wave through the night...